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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/668,026	09/22/2003	Jai Hoon Kim		1396

7590 03/24/2006

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EXAMINER

CLOW, LORI A

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1631

DATE MAILED: 03/24/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/668,026	KIM ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Lori A. Clow, Ph.D.	1631	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 22 September 2003.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1 and 2 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1 and 2 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on 22 September 2003 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner. Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a). Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Status of Claims

Claims 1 and 2 are currently pending.

Priority

The claim to Foreign Priority to Korean Application 2002-60295 filed 2 October 2002 is acknowledged.

Drawings

The drawings filed 22 September 2003 are accepted.

Specification

The use of the trademark BLAST™ has been noted in this application. It should be capitalized wherever it appears and be accompanied by the generic terminology.

Although the use of trademarks is permissible in patent applications, the proprietary nature of the marks should be respected and every effort made to prevent their use in any manner which might adversely affect their validity as trademarks. It is also noted that this may not be the only instance of a Trademark in the specification and that this is merely and example.

The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: The specification contains grammatical errors and should be corrected. For example, see page 2, line 1. Further, the Title contains a spelling mistake of the word “database”. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

Non-Statutory Subject Matter

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 1 and 2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

In the instant case, the claims include nonfunctional descriptive material of which no requisite functionality is present to satisfy the practical application requirement of statutory subject matter. Merely claiming nonfunctional descriptive material, i.e., abstract ideas, stored in a computer-readable medium, in a computer, or on an electromagnetic carrier signal does not make it statutory. See Diehr (referenced below). In the instant case, the claims do not result in a physical transformation of the data to a different state or thing. There is no stated outcome to the claimed method of handling a database for bioinformatics such that a concrete, tangible, and useful result is apparent. The recording medium does not generate an outcome which is concrete, tangible and useful, as well. The medium is merely storing data which has been manipulated and no physical transformation of that data has occurred. The claims are, therefore, non-statutory.

For claims including such excluded subject matter to be eligible, the claim must be for a practical application of the abstract idea, law of nature, or natural phenomenon. Diehr, 450 U.S. at 187, 209 USPQ at 8 (“application of a law of nature or mathematical formula to a known structure or process may well be deserving of patent protection.”); Benson, 409 U.S. at 71, 175 USPQ at 676 (rejecting formula claim because it “has no substantial practical application”).

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To satisfy section 101 requirements, the claim must be for a practical application of the § 101 judicial exception, which can be identified in various ways:

- 1) The claimed invention “transforms” an article or physical object to a different state or thing.
- 2) The claimed invention otherwise produces a useful, concrete and tangible result, based on the factors discussed below.

Practical Application That Produces a Useful, Concrete, and Tangible Result

For eligibility analysis, physical transformation “is not an invariable requirement, but merely one example of how a mathematical algorithm [or law of nature] may bring about a useful application.” AT&T, 172 F.3d at 1358-59, 50 USPQ2d at 1452... In determining whether the claim is for a “practical application,” the focus is not on whether the steps taken to achieve a particular result are useful, tangible and concrete, but rather that the final result achieved by the claimed invention is “useful, tangible and concrete.” (1) “USEFUL RESULT” For an invention to be “useful” it must satisfy the utility requirement of section 101. The USPTO’s official interpretation of the utility requirement provides that the utility of an invention has to be (i) specific, (ii) substantial and (iii) credible. MPEP § 2107 and Fisher, 421 F.3d at ___, 76 USPQ2d at 1230 (citing the Utility Guidelines with approval for interpretation of “specific” and “substantial”). (2) “TANGIBLE RESULT” The tangible requirement does not necessarily mean that a claim must either be tied to a particular machine or apparatus or must operate to change articles or materials to a different state or thing. However, the tangible requirement does require that the claim must recite more than a § 101 judicial exception, in that the process claim must set forth a practical application of that § 101 judicial exception to produce a real-world result. Benson, 409 U.S. at 71-72, 175 USPQ at 676-77 (invention ineligible because had “no substantial practical application.”). “[A]n application of a law of nature or mathematical formula to a ... process may well be deserving of patent protection.” Diehr, 450 U.S. at 187, 209 USPQ at 8 (emphasis added); see also Corning, 56 U.S. (15 How.) at 268, 14 L.Ed. 683 (“It is for the discovery or invention of some practical method or means of producing a beneficial result or effect, that a patent is granted . . .”). In other words, the opposite meaning of “tangible” is “abstract.” (3) “CONCRETE RESULT” Another consideration is whether the invention produces a “concrete” result. Usually, this question arises when a result cannot be assured. In other words, the process must have a result that can be substantially repeatable or the process must substantially produce the same result again. In re Swartz, 232 F.3d 862, 864, 56 USPQ2d 1703, 1704 (Fed. Cir. 2000) (where asserted result produced by the claimed invention is “irreproducible” claim should be rejected under section 101). The opposite of “concrete” is unrepeatable or unpredictable.

See also:

http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/dapp/opla/preognitice/guidelines101_20051026.pdf

Utility

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 1 and 2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific, substantial, asserted utility or a well established utility.

The method of handling a database for bioinformatics is not supported by a specific asserted utility because the specification does not set forth a specific asserted utility nor is a well-established utility found in the art. The method storing sequence information related to bioinformatics without knowing the significance of that sequence information or the relationship of the sequence information does not equate to a specific or substantial utility. The specification fails to provide a specific, substantial, or well-established utility for the series of steps claimed for comparing sequences. The specification, rather, is directed to a time saving device for sequence comparison, which is not reflected the steps of the instant claims. As such, the claims do not have a supported utility.

Claims 1 and 2 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. Specifically, since the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific, substantial, asserted utility or a well established utility for the reasons set forth above, one skilled in the art clearly would not know how to use the claimed invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

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The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 1 and 2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 1 recites “connected to each user terminal”. There is insufficient antecedent basis in the claim for “each user terminal”. Clarification is requested.

Claim 1 recites “compares a sequence requested from each user terminal with sequences of the database to analyze a result of the comparison”. It is unclear what is intended by this step. A sequence for a user terminal is compared to sequences of a database to analyze the result of the comparison. What comparison? No comparison has been made, other than the sequence to the database. Clarification is requested.

Claim 1 recites “of the current order” at step (c). There is insufficient antecedent basis for “the current order” in the claim. Clarification is requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1 and 2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Eckman et al. (Bioinformatics (1998) Vol. 14, No. 1, pages 2-13).

In regard to claim 1, Eckman et al. teach a web-based system, the Merck Gene Index (MGI) for mining genomic information. The MGI browser integrates data from a variety of sources and storage formats, both local and remote (page 2, column 1, “results”). Biological sequence information, for example EST sequences, are queried against database for comparison of the sequence to the database (page 4, column 2, “distributed relational access”). The user sequence is presented and the MGI browser is able to investigate further ESTs that are not assigned to an index. A server can perform a BLAST search of the EST against the full set of Merck EST. BLAST compares sequence to all sequences in the database to “judge” whether there exists a sequence that has been compared and analyzed for all sequences and places that sequence into an alignment (effectively removing it from the queue).

In regard to claim 2, Eckman teaches that this system includes the instructions for its implementation (pages 3-5, system and methods).

Claims 1 and 2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Li et al. (Bioinformatics (2000) Vol. 16, No. 12, pages 1105-1110).

In regard to claim 1, Li teaches a multiple intermediate sequence search method (MISS) which consists of the following concepts: initial search, selection of intermediate queries, intermediate search loop, and final result analysis (page 1106, column 2, “methods and algorithms), meeting the limitations of the instant claim.

In regard to claim 2, Li teaches the storage of the sequence data (page 1106, column 2, paragraph 4).

No claims are allowed.

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Inquiries

Papers related to this application may be submitted to Technical Center 1600 by facsimile transmission. Papers should be faxed to Technical Center 1600 via the PTO Fax Center. The faxing of such papers must conform with the notices published in the Official Gazette, 1096 OG 30 (November 15, 1988), 1156 OG 61 (November 16, 1993), and 1157 OG 94 (December 28, 1993) (See 37 CFR § 1.6(d)). The Central Fax Center Number is (571) 273-8300.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Lori A. Clow, Ph.D., whose telephone number is (571) 272-0715. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday from 10 am to 6:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Ardin Marschel, Ph.D., can be reached on (571) 272-0718.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to (571) 272-0547.

Patent applicants with problems or questions regarding electronic images that can be viewed in the Patent Application Information Retrieval system (PAIR) can now contact the USPTO's Patent Electronic Business Center (Patent EBC) for assistance. Representatives are available to answer your questions daily from 6 am to midnight (EST). The toll free number is (866) 217-9197. When calling please have your application serial or patent number, the type of document you are having an image problem with, the number of pages and the specific nature of the problem. The Patent Electronic Business Center will notify applicants of the resolution of the problem within 5-7 business days. Applicants can also check PAIR to confirm that the problem has been corrected. The USPTO's Patent Electronic Business Center is a complete service center supporting all patent business on the Internet. The USPTO's PAIR system provides Internet-based access to patent application status and history information. It also enables applicants to view the scanned images of their own application file folder(s) as well as general patent information available to the public.

March 19, 2006

Lori A. Clow, Ph.D.

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Lori A. Clow
Patent Examiner